

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BUENOS 08038 102133Z

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8181

INFO AMEMBASSY LIMA

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 8038

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: PFOR, CI, PE, AR

SUBJECT: CHILE - PERU TENSIONS OVER BOLIVIAN OUTLET TO SEA

1. DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF FONMIN DEPARTMENT OF LATIN AMERICAN AFFAIRS, IBANEZ, CALLED EMBOFF IN ON DEC. 9 TO DISCUSS STATUS OF NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN CHILE, BOLIVIA AND PERU OVER OUTLET TO SEA FOR BOLIVNA, AND DEGREE OF GENERAL TENSION BETWEEN CHILE AND PERU. IBANEZ SAID HE WAS PREPARING PAPER FOR MINISTRY ON SUBJECT, AND WISHED EXCHANGE VIEWS WITH U.S. POLITICAL OFFICER HE KNEW TO BE FAMILIAR WITH BACKGROUND OF PROBLEM.

2. ACCORDING TO THIS OFFICIAL, GOA BELIEVES THAT TENSION HAS HEIGHTENED SERIOUSLY BETWEEN CHILE AND PERU PARTLY AS RESULT OF WHAT AMOUNTS TO FAILURE OF NEGOTIATIONS OVER BOLIVIAN OUTLET TO SEA AND PARTLY AS RESULT OF CONTINUING INCREASE IN PERUVIAN SUPERIORITY IN MILITARY EQUIPMENT. AT SAME TIME, HE SAW PROSPECT OF INCREASE IN INTERNAL POLITICAL PROBLEMS OF BOLIVIA AS DREAM OF SEACOAST FADED. CHILE HAD ERRED IN DEMANDING EQUAL COMPENSATION IN LAND EXCHANGE FROM BOLIVIA AND IN GOING TO EXTREME OF EVEN INCLUDING SURFACE OF TERRITORIAL SEA TO BE NEGOTIATED. OVERALL, GOA SAW EVERY REASON TO EXPECT INCREASE IN TENSIONS IN AREA, AND FELT THAT POSSIBILITY OF WAR BETWEEN CHILE AND PERU WAS TO BE TAKEN MORE SERIOUSLY.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 BUENOS 08038 102133Z

3. OF PARTICULAR CONCERN TO GOA IS PERUVIAN PURCHASE OF SOVIET TANKS, ETC., AND OBVIOUS NEED FOR SOVIET OR SOVIET-TRAINED TECHNICIANS AND ADVISORS TO SHOW PERU HOW TO USE EQUIPMENT. MORE LIKELY DEVELOPMENT WAS ARRIVAL IN PERU OF NUMBERS OF CUBANS, WHO WOULD BE MUCH MORE "ACCEPTABLE" IN PERU THAN SOVIETS. IF A CONFLICT DID BREAK OUT BETWEEN CHILE AND PERU, CUBANS MIGHT BECOME FACTOR OF GREAT CONCERN, NOT ONLY TO OTHER LATIN AMERICANS BUT ALSO TO U.S., IBANEZ SUGGESTED. HE SUGGESTED THAT QUALITY OF CHILEAN MANPOWER MIGHT WELL OFFSET PERUVIAN EQUIPMENT, BUT THAT PERUVIANS COULD VERY PROBABLY TAKE ARICA AT LEAST. SITUATION MIGHT BE EXPLOITED BY CUBA. WITH STAGE SET, HE THEN SIDLED UP TO QUESTION EVIDENTLY ON HIS MIND: WOULD U.S. "INTERVENE"?

4. EMBOFF EXPRESSED HIS DOUBT THAT LATIN AMERICA WOULD EVER SEE THE U.S. MARINES STORMING THE BEACH AT ARICA TO SEPARATE THE CHILEAN AND PERUVIAN ARMIES, IF THAT IS WHAT IBANEZ HAD IN MIND. WE WOULD, EMBOFF STRESSED, SHARE DEEP CONCERN OF ALL AMERICAN NATIONS OVER SUCH A CONFLICT, AND WOULD CERTAINLY HOPE TO JOIN WITH ALL OAS MEMBERS AND PERHAPS UN TO FIND FAST AND FAIR DIPLOMATIC SOLUTION. IBANEZ VOLUNTEERED OWN VIEW THAT DIRECT U.S. INTERVENTION, SUCH AS LANDING TROOPS, WOULD OF COURSE BE A DISASTER AND WOULD INSTANTLY RALLY MOST OF LATIN AMERICA AGAINST U.S.; HE AGREED THAT SUCH A DEVELOPMENT WAS HIGHLY UNLIKELY.

5. WHEN ASKED IN TURN WHAT GOA POSITION WOULD BE IN CASE OF CHILEAN-PERUVIAN CONFLICT, IBANEZ SAID THAT ARGENTINA WOULD TAKE SAME COURSE AS U.S. IN TURNING TO OAS FOR JOINT CONSULTATION AND ACTION. HE RECOGNIZED THAT VARIOUS INTERESTS INVOLVED MIGHT TRY TO BENEFIT FROM EXPLOITATION OF TRADITIONAL GEOPOLITICAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN NATIONS IN THE REGION, ESPECIALLY BETWEEN BRAZIL AND ARGENTINA, AND THAT THIS WOULD HAVE TO BE GUARDED AGAINST.

6. ON RELATED TOPIC, IBANEZ SAID THAT PRES. VIDELA HAD HAD HARD TIME KEEPING SUFFICIENT "DISTANCE" FROM THE CHILEANS DURING HIS VISIT THERE, BUT FONMIN OFFICIALS THINK HE DID FINE JOB AND ARE PROUD OF HIM.

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PAGE 03 BUENOS 08038 102133Z

7. COMMENT: WE DO NOT RPT NOT CONSIDER THIS REQUEST FOR DISCUSSION OF SUBJECT OF CHILE-PERU TENSIONS TO REPRESENT A GOA "CONSULTATION" WITH USG. IBANEZ IS KEY OFFICER AT WORKING LEVEL, WITH DIRECT RESPONSIBILITY FOR PREPARING STAFF PAPERS, ETC., ON RELATIONS WITH OTHER LA NATIONS. HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH EMBOFF WOULD PERMIT HIM TO SPEAK INFORMALLY, AND IT WAS CLEAR HE WAS SEEKING VIEWS TO WORK INTO HIS REPORT. ON THE OTHER HAND, GOA IS UNDOUBTEDLY CONCERNED OVER LATEST UNFAVORABLE

DEVELOPMENTS IN CHILE-BOLIVIA-PERU NEGOTIATIONS, OVER
REAL OR POTENTIAL SOVIET AND CUBAN PRESENCE IN PERU, AND
WHAT IT SEES AS RECENT INCREASE IN DANGER OF CONFLICT BETWEEN
CHILE AND PERU.
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